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Memorandum

THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE CONGO

17 June 1964

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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17 June 1964

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
MEMORANDUM:

SUMMARY

The Congo seems headed for a period of increasing instability and possibly a total breakdown of governmental authority. The government is already faced with open rebellions in Kwilu and Kivu. Given the generally high level of discontent, new outbreaks could occur at any of several other places at almost any time. With the last of the UN troops leaving by 30 June, the maintenance of order devolves for the time being on the notoriously incompetent Congo National Army (ANC). Grossly deficient in leadership, low in morale, and with reserves all but exhausted, this force offers little hope as an instrument for preserving order. To shore up the ANC, the Congolese Government is trying to get troops from friendly African states, but prospects are dim. If the security crisis worsens and the Congo is unable to obtain substantial African military support, the government may be forced to appeal to the Belgians for military assistance. The immediately pressing problem is military, but long-term solutions for the security problem must be political. Some Congolese and the Belgians are trying to encourage a government of "national reconciliation" by including ex-Katanga leader Tshombé and left-wing exiles now in Brazzaville. However, it is far from certain that any combination being contemplated will be more successful than the present government in keeping order.

THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE CONGO

Security Threats

1. The Congo, on the eve of its fifth year of independence, seems headed at a minimum for a period of increasing instability and possibly a total breakdown of governmental authority. At the heart of the problem is the continued weakening of the central government's unity and its authority vis a vis the provinces--a process which has been going on since the end of colonial rule.*

2. The thorniest immediate problem is the two-month-old rebellion in the province of Kivu Central. A relatively small tribe has defeated and demoralized a succession of Congo Army (ANC) units sent into the area and now threatens the provincial capital, Bukavu, many of whose inhabitants are openly sympathetic to the rebels. ANC detachments in Kivu have rallied somewhat from their near-collapse of two weeks ago, but their hold is shaky. The rebels are already fairly well armed with captured weapons, and may receive additional support from sympathetic native sources in adjacent Burundi or from Communist representatives there.

3. Although the Kivu rebellion is at least partly ethnic in nature--a tribe hostile to the rebels dominates the provincial government--it also appears to have political overtones born of discontent with more general conditions. The rebel leader, a local chieftain, says he is fighting the "despotic" Adoula government. He has doubtless been encouraged in this view by representatives of the left-wing anti-Adoula exile group, the "Committee of National Liberation" (CNL), which has its head office in Brazzaville, across the river from Leopoldville. The CNL has set up a quasi-government "administration" in rebel territory which issues travel permits to Europeans and cranks out propaganda. It also has a branch office in contact with Chinese Communist diplomats in Burundi, but so far it has probably received only limited material support from the Chinese.

*See CIA Memorandum, The Political Situation and Prospects in the Congo, dated 20 February 1964.

4. The other open rebellion, in Kwilu Province, has been going on for six months. This rebellion too is compounded with a high degree of discontent with the central and provincial government and ethnic rivalry between "ins" and "outs." Except for sporadic skirmishing, it is relatively inactive now. Government forces have regained control of some of the Kwilu countryside, but many rebels, including the leader, Peiping-trained Pierre Mulele, are still at large. The CNL has claimed to be aiding the Mulelists, but this seems doubtful.

5. New disturbances could break out in any of several other areas. Already there are indications of insurrectionary outbreaks in the area south of Kivu near Lake Tanganyika. Other potential trouble spots include the volatile city of Stanleyville, once the seat of Antoine Gizenga's left-wing regime; the Kasai region, in which local antigovernment youth bands--known as "jeunesse"--are active; Katanga, where Tshombe is still popular; and even Leopoldville itself. While these places are now under nominal ANC control, trouble in one or more of them could easily erupt at almost any time.

6. Behind the many causes of the security crisis is the pervasive dissatisfaction of the people with their governments--national, provincial, and local. These governments are corrupt and incompetent. Low-level civil servants are rarely paid on time--salaries having been siphoned off by higher officials--farmers are often unable to market crops because roads are unrepaired, and average citizens seldom can obtain the social services which the Belgians provided on an extensive scale. Because the cost of corruption and maladministration is high, government budgets have been far out of balance, and inflation is rampant. The Leopoldville food price index, whose base of 100 in 1959, reached 232 last November and 425 this month. Unemployment is high, particularly in the larger cities, where resort to subsistence farming--common in the rest of the Congo--is impossible. The 21 provincial governments are almost independent of the central government, which shows few signs of wanting to cope with the country's problems. In the quasi-anarchy that has prevailed in much of the countryside since independence, tribal animosities

have intensified, with some tribes successful at grabbing local power and others resentful over losing it.

7. This is the situation that the CNL is trying to exploit from its main office in Brazzaville. The CNL is a motley collection of some 150-200 self-exiled left-wing politicians, Congolese students returned from the USSR, and deserters from the ANC. Its announced objective is the overthrow of Adoula, but its nine-month history is one of factionalism and only sporadic effectiveness. It has sought to identify itself with the rebellions, but the evidence is slim that it instigated them or that it exercises any real control over them. CNL groups sent to assassinate top Leopoldville officials have been apprehended by Congolese security forces. CNL saboteurs, active in the capital city in recent weeks, are out of action for the moment, probably because of a series of arrests and a tight curfew. The weakness of the Congolese Government and the widespread dissatisfaction of the general Congolese population give the CNL a good deal to work on, however. For example, its Burundi branch, previously faction-ridden, was able to pull together when the rebellion in Kivu got under way. The organization may obtain more aid from the Chinese if the security situation deteriorates further. If a radical upheaval were to occur in Leopoldville, any left-wing government would probably contain many CNL members.

Efforts to Meet the Threats

8. The central government's principal mechanism of control, the ANC, is noted for its pillaging and raping and is hated and feared. Now it is near collapse as an organized force. Woefully lacking in leadership, prone to mutiny, and manned by soldiers who tend to regard their rifles as meal tickets, it has committed all but a handful of its reserves to combating the Kivu and Kwilu rebellions. ANC chief General Mobutu, characterized in December [REDACTED] as "vain and lazy," has until recently refused to admit his army's shortcomings and has been a major stumbling block to Western attempts to restrain it. In the last year alone, four of the 20-odd ANC battalions have been involved in mutinies, the latest

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on 27 May in the North Katangan provincial capital of Albertville, where part of the garrison joined an abortive rebellion. The ANC performance in Kivu has been shockingly bad. On 1 May, for example, an ANC detachment laden with rifles and automatic weapons and led by the much touted area commander, Colonel Mulamba, was disarmed, beaten up, and then released by a group of tribesmen armed mostly with machetes. Colonel Mulamba still commands government troops in Kivu, which now include elements of seven Congolese battalions. The progressive reinforcement of Kivu has seriously depleted ANC garrisons in other areas, including Stanleyville, southern Katanga, and Leopoldville. The arrival of a half dozen T-28 aircraft supplied by the US and some armored cars acquired from the UN may stave off disaster in Kivu, but the ANC unaided would probably be unable to contain additional disturbances elsewhere on even a modest scale.

9. Attempts to retrain the ANC are being stepped up; about 90 Belgian, 70 American, and 10 Israeli military men are in the Congo now and more US and Belgian advisers are on the way. While the immediate situation has probably deteriorated too far to be corrected by training in the short run, these foreign personnel are already proving useful as tactical advisers and technical specialists. The arrival in Kivu of a handful of Belgian officers, for example, was probably responsible for avoiding the complete collapse of the ANC there early this month. It is doubtful, however, that the assistance of advisers alone could enable the ANC to cope with large new outbreaks.

10. With the last 100 UN troops leaving the Congo by 30 June, and the UN unlikely to extend its military operations, the Congolese Government has been casting about elsewhere for soldiers to stiffen the ANC. It has orally requested troops of Nigeria and Tunisia, and has hopes that Ethiopia, Senegal, or other friendly African states will send contingents. No substantial response to these requests now appears likely. Both Tunisia and Ethiopia are disinclined to embroil themselves again in Congolese internal disorders, and other African states probably are similarly hesitant. Hope still exists that a Nigerian battalion, now in the Congo under UN aegis, might stay under

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bilateral agreement, but the number of Nigerians involved is small--less than a thousand--and their government is showing signs of cold feet. An appeal to the Organization of African Unity is conceivable, but not likely as long as Adoula is in power, owing to his fear of permitting the intrusion of radical African influence into the scene.

11. As a last resort, the Congolese Government may appeal to Belgium for troops. Belgium would dislike the prospect, and would be fearful of a storm of criticism similar to the one aroused by its intervention in 1960. However, Brussels might intervene in protection of Belgian interests, especially if it were assured of firm Western--particularly US--support.

Political Outlook

12. The mandate of the present parliament runs out on 30 June, and President Kasavubu will appoint a new provisional government to govern until projected parliamentary elections. Until recently it appeared almost certain that Kasavubu would choose Adoula to lead the transitional government; this choice is now less sure.

13. Adoula--who with UN and US help has kept the Congo in the Western camp for three years--has many virtues, including the rare one of honesty, but he has no popular following, and only now is making tepid moves to promote a national political party. He has relied primarily on the backing of his "Binza" group, including Congo Army Commander General Mobutu, Surete Chief Nendaka, and Justice Minister Bomboko. This support now appears to be wavering. One reason for Adoula's longevity in office has been the weakness of the opposition and the dearth of alternatives acceptable to various parties concerned, both Congolese and Western. The opposition is now strengthening--at least by comparison with the government--and some hitherto unacceptable alternatives may be looking more palatable.

14. The imminence of a new government and the deteriorating security situation have sharply stepped up political maneuvering in Leopoldville. A new

political grouping calling itself the African Democratic Committee (CDA) has formed with the intention of influencing Kasavubu in his choice of a new government. The CDA includes--among others--five of Adoula's cabinet ministers, including Minister of Defense Anany, and may have some support from Kasavubu himself. The group has tried to enlist Katangan support and reportedly has approached Tshombé, who appears to be interested in heading it. The CDA has also indicated it would permit the return of the radical CNL. Brussels has been promoting the idea of a new government of "national reconciliation," including elements from both left and right. [REDACTED]

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Anany's role in the political grouping is uncertain. He has often expressed his desire to become premier, but recently he reportedly said he would be willing to support Tshombé for the top position if permitted to keep his defense portfolio.

15. Tshombé has been maneuvering to return to power, in Katanga at least, but preferably on the national level, almost since his self-imposed exile in Europe began a year ago. In a press interview in Paris on 10 June, he indicated he is ready to return provided he can obtain personal amnesty. He hinted he was ready to support the CDA, reiterated his idea that the Congo required a government of national reconciliation, and implied that he would like to head it. The Tshombé interview is certain to put strong pressure on the Leopoldville government. Tshombé, despite his absence, remains the strongest African leader in the economically important southern Katanga. Some 3,000 ex-Katangan gendarmes and a handful of white mercenaries amenable to Tshombé's control are in adjoining Angola. These he can use to bargain for a role on the national level, or if denied this, to try to re-establish himself in Katanga. Because of the ANC's weakness there, the US consul in Elisabethville believes Tshombé's force could prevail. Although Brussels has denied that it is supporting Tshombé's ambitions, it has helped him in the past, and may do so again. Should the Congolese Government be forced to call on the Belgians for military assistance, the Belgians might well require Tshombé's presence in the government, perhaps as premier, as a quid pro quo.

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16. To keep the security situation from deteriorating further, a combination of circumstances--such as the rejuvenation of the ANC and a forbearance of new dissidents from rebellion--would be required. These seem unlikely at the present time. Considerable training and time will be needed to make the army a dependable instrument of central authority. The presence of African or of Belgian troops might retard the deterioration for the time being, but any improvement, to be lasting, would require greater Congolese participation. Any government as narrowly based as Adoula's can have little promise of bringing this about.

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